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S/GWI, NEA/ELA, NEA/PPD

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OEXC](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY DAMASCUS PROPOSALS FOR SMALL GRANTS
INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 00132094

Classified By: Charge d Affairs Charles Hunter for reasons 1.5 b and d.

¶1. (C) Embassy Damascus requests S/GWI support and funding for three proposals: "Grassroots Diplomacy," "Gender Research," and "Empowering Young, Deaf Women." These programs represent our first, substantive engagement with independent, grassroots NGOs in almost five years. With full funding we believe that S/GWI and Post will advance women's empowerment and democratic rights on both macro and micro levels. The Administration's nomination of the first U.S. Ambassador to Syria since 2005, represents a ripe moment to advance the development of Syria's nascent women's civil society.

¶2. (SBU) Embassy Damascus recommends the following projects for S/GWI funding in the following rank order as they represent the best opportunities for us to create a more democratic environment for women in Syria. Below are brief summaries; detailed proposals will be sent via email to S/WGI. We chose these out of five submissions based on the credibility of the organization proposing them, their practicality and potential for near-term, tangible impact, and their relevance to USG goals in the region.

¶3. (C) &Grassroots Diplomacy.⁸ While political peacemaking has traditionally been the domain of men in Syria, it is women who bear the responsibility for conflict resolution in everyday life. These same women pay a heavy price when men fail to resolve these differences peacefully. To address this problem, the Syrian International Academy proposes a course for women professionals focused on mediation, conflict resolution and respectful debate. Throughout the year, students in the course will learn how to analyze different conflicts, thus learning how to sympathize with all sides in a conflict. Such analysis is non-existent in Syria,s heavily regimented and antiquated educational system where critical thinking is discouraged.

¶4. (C) In a region entrenched in long-term political conflict, the local organizer, Hind Qabawat (strictly protect), believes that by working with small groups of 10-15 women drawn from a wide diversity of professionals and social backgrounds, she can teach students to leverage their influences inside this traditional, family-focused society to create voices for peace, understanding and democratic reform. Post has worked with Ms. Qabawat on a similar course and she achieved truly transformative results by teaching students how to ask thought-provoking questions, how to engage in respectful debate with visiting American students, and how to use mediation to resolve their differences.

¶5. (SBU) &Gender Research.⁸ Women's issues are not widely covered in the Syrian media. In fact, according to Etana

Press, the ignorance and lack of widespread substantive research on women's issues has allowed Syrian society to ignore women's issues and even to excuse its present treatment of women. The local organization believes that by educating female Syrian journalists on how to report appropriately on gender issues in the mainstream media, they will expand the political and social space in which women can advocate for change in their lives. The organization proposes to educate fifteen journalists from both private- and public-sector media outlets. The participants will conclude the course by creating a comprehensive report on gender issues in Syria and will lay down a series of markers by which women's democratic and social freedoms can be measured.

16. (SBU) &Empowering Young, Deaf Women.8 The Imma Center for the Deaf provides education to young women in the poor Jabal al-Hoss region, and proposes a program to provide education, training and employment to twenty-four deaf, under-privileged girls. The additional funding will provide these women with training in both the individual production and marketing of their own handicrafts. The twenty-four young women currently studying at the Center want to develop economic independence and this program is designed to give them the knowledge and skills to run a business on a small, but profitable scale.

HUNTER